

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 FEA-02 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 INR-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, TECH, UK

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT ON CHOICE OF
REACTOR SYSTEM

BEGIN SUMMARY: FEB. 4, HOUSE OF COMMONS SELECT
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUED REPORT
SUMMARIZING TESTIMONY GIVEN BEFORE IT ON "THE CHOICE OF
A REACTOR SYSTEM." COMMITTEE SUPPORTS INSTALLATION OF
NEW NUCLEAR CAPACITY, BUT SAID NO PROPOSAL TO BUILD
AMERICAN LWRS SHOULD BE APPROVED BY GOVERNMENT ON BASIS
OF EVIDENCE AT PRESENT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE. IT
RECOMMENDED THAT UNTIL THE H.T.R. AND THE FAST BREEDER
ARE AVAILABLE, BRITAIN SHOULD USE ONE OF THE ALREADY
PROVEN BRITISH NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES. PUBLICATION OF
REPORT GAVE RISE TO PRESS ARTICLE AND EDITORIAL COMMENTS:
MOST SIGNIFICANT IS TIMES EDITORIAL NOTING DIFFICULTY
OF DECISION GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE, TERMING COMMITTEE
REPORT "SHOT THROUGH WITH A CHAUVINISTIC STRAIN" AND
POINTING OUT THAT ONLY AMERICAN WATER COOLED AND
CANADIAN HEAVY WATER SYSTEMS HAVE ANY TRACK RECORD OF
SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. COMMITTEE REPORT WILL BE REPORTED BY AIRGRAM BUT
FINAL THREE PARAGRAPHS QUOTED BELOW SUMMARIZE THE
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COMMITTEE'S VIEWS":

"IN OUR PREVIOUS REPORT WE URGED THE NECESSITY FOR THE PURCHASE OF NEW NUCLEAR PLANT. COMMENTING ON THE POSITION ADOPTED BY THE CEGB AT THE TIME, WE RECOMMENDED THAT THEY SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PURCHASE A NEW NUCLEAR STATION. WE STILL STRONGLY SUPPORT THE INSTALLATION OF NEW NUCLEAR CAPACITY, BUT NO PROPOSAL TO BUILD AMERICAN LIGHT WATER REACTORS UNDER LICENCE IN THE UK SHOULD BE APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE EVIDENCE AT PRESENT PUBLICLY AVAILABLE. TO ORDER LWRS IN THE NUMBERS PROPOSED BY THE CEGB WOULD MEAN THAT, EXCEPT FOR WORK ON THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR THE COUNTRY WOULD BE VIRTUALLY ABANDONING THE LONG-ESTABLISHED BRITISH R & D EFFORT."

"IN VIEW OF THE CONFLICT OF OPINION ON THE SAFETY OF LWRS, IT IS, IN OUR OPINION, FOR THE PROPONENTS OF LIGHT WATER TECHNOLOGY TO PROVE ITS SAFETY BEYOND ALL REASONABLE DOUBT, RATHER THAN FOR THEIR OPPONENTS TO PROVE THE CONTRARY. THIS POINT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN A DENSELY POPULATED COUNTRY LIKE BRITAIN."

"IN OUR VIEW, COMMON SENSE WOULD INDICATE THAT UNTIL THE HTR AND THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR ARE AVAILABLE ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS, THE WAY FORWARD SHOULD BE TO USE ONE OF THE BRITISH NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES WHICH IS ALREADY PROVEN, SINCE THIS IS LIKELY TO SATISFY THE NUCLEAR INSPECTORATE WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY. IN THIS CONNECTION WE NOTE THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ELECTRICITY BOARD FOR THE SGHWR."

2. TIMES EDITORIAL WILL BE REPORTED BY AIRGRAM.

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FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY:

FEW DECISIONS CAN POSE SUCH FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS AS THAT NOW FACING LORD CARRINGTON ON FUTURE NUCLEAR POWER STATION ORDERING PROGRAM. VIEWS OF THOSE WHO GAVE EVIDENCE TO SELECT COMMITTEE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE DIVERGENT. CONCLUSIONS OF SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT ARE NOT STRIKINGLY SUBSTANTIAL AND DO LITTLE TO HELP LORD CARRINGTON MAKE UP HIS MIND. REPORT IS SHOT THROUGH WITH CHAUVINISTIC STRAIN NAMELY THAT THE SOLUTION SHOULD BE EVENTUALLY TO "BUY BRITISH." IT WOULD HAVE BEEN WISER TO HAVE ALLOWED A MORE COMMERCIAL APPROACH TO DOMINATE THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS. GOVERNMENT WILL BE PROVED WISER IF IT IGNORES ARGUMENTS BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL FLAG WAVING. TWO QUESTIONS REMAIN UNANSWERED. HOW MUCH NEW CAPACITY DOES CENTRAL ELECTRIC GENERATING BOARD REQUIRE AND HOW SOON DOES IT NEED IT? EDITORIAL CONCLUDES: "OF THE MORE ADVANCED NUCLEAR POWER SYSTEMS, THE ONLY ONES WITH ANY TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS ARE THE AMERICAN WATER-COOLED REACTORS AND THE CANADIAN HEAVY-WATER SYSTEM. THOSE GIVING EVIDENCE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE HAVE QUITE RIGHTLY DRAWN ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT NONE OF THESE SYSTEMS HAVE SAFETY APPROVAL IN THIS COUNTRY. IF, HOWEVER, A NEW GENERATION OF NUCLEAR POWER REACTORS IS REQUIRED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, IT

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IS FROM THIS FIELD THAT THE SELECTION WILL HAVE TO BE MADE."

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